

ELGOUNA
FILM
FESTIVAL

2ND EDITION

مهرجان الجونة السينمائي

20TH - 28TH SEPTEMBER 2018

22TH - 27TH

SEPTEMBER 2018

CINEGOUNA *platforms* PROJECTS BOOK



CINEGOUNA PROJECTS
platforme BOOK

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WELCOME TO THE CINEGOUNA *SpringBoard*

Dear Friends,

Whether you're an industry professional or an aspiring filmmaker, you've made the right decision to attend CineGouna Platform this year. We are thrilled to welcome you to the 2nd edition of CineGouna SpringBoard, one of the two programmes of CGP, the industry arm of El Gouna Film Festival.

CGP aims to be the home for Arab filmmaking talent. It is designed to offer filmmakers opportunities to network with regional and international industry professionals, strengthen their talents, and find artistic and financial support.

CineGouna SpringBoard is a project development and co-production lab for Arab projects in development and films in post-production. This year, we received 145 submissions (101 projects in development, 44 films in post-production) that went through a selection process by a committee of industry professionals. 12 projects in development and 6 films in post-production were selected to participate in the programme, and present their projects/films to a jury of regional and international film experts.

The participating projects/films will be competing for a total of \$175,000 of cash prizes. Thanks to the support of our partners and sponsors, who are offering financial and in-kind rewards, besides the \$15,000 offered by El Gouna Film Festival to one project in development and one film in post-production.

However, the filmmakers' experience would not be complete without the support and guidance from each and everyone attending CineGouna Platform. We are proud to be hosting leaders of the regional and international film industry, from producers and funding institutions to sales agents, distributors, festival programmers and broadcasters.

Finally, we sincerely hope you find interest in attending film screenings, as well as CineGouna Bridge masterclasses and panels, as they are too good to be missed. Once again, we are excited to have you here, and hope you have a great experience in the beautiful resort of El Gouna.

Sincerely,

CineGouna Platform Team

AWARDS

All selected projects in development and films in post-production will compete for awards that will be decided by a jury of industry experts. One project in development and one film in post-production will receive a CineGouna Platform Certificate and a cash prize of US \$15,000 each.

Additional awards and cash prizes are presented through partnerships with the local and regional institutions listed below.

US \$15,000 from New Century Production

US \$10,000 from Arab Radio & Television (ART)

US \$10,000 from Beelink Productions

US \$10,000 from Cedars Art Production (Sabbah Brothers)

US \$10,000 from Creative Media Ventures

US \$10,000 from Eagle Films

US \$10,000 from iProductions

US \$10,000 from Maqam Productions

US \$10,000 from O3 Productions (MBC Group)

US \$10,000 from Synergy Films

US \$10,000 from from the US Embassy

US \$10,000 worth of post production services from The Cell Post Production

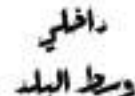
US \$5,000 from Mentor Arabia

US \$5,000 from New Black worth of film packaging services

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CINEGOUNA SPRINGBOARD JURY



Sherif El Bendary

EGYPT

Egyptian filmmaker. His first short fiction film *Rise & Shine* was officially selected in more than 75 film festivals and won 15 awards. El Bendary's second short film *At Day's End* won 14 awards, and with his short film *Curfew*, as part of the collective feature *18 Days*, Sherif participated in the official selection of Cannes 2011. In 2017, he made his first feature narrative film *Ali, Ibrahim and the Goat*, and in the same year he directed his first TV series *Al-Gama'a 2*. He is currently working on his first feature film script *Two Rooms and a Parlor*, which won the CineGouna SpringBoard award in 2017.



Hania Mroué

LEBANON

Founder and director of the Metropolis Art Cinema, the first art-house cinema in Lebanon opened in 2006. She was the managing director of the Arab film festival Cinema Days of Beirut, and she managed the Med-Screen project, funded by the European Union in the framework of the Euromed Audiovisual II programme for the promotion of Arab cinema. Med-Screen organized more than 30 Arab film weeks all through Europe and Mediterranean countries, and presented Arab films at the two most prestigious European markets: the EFM and Cannes Film Market. In 2009, she started MC Distribution, a company dedicated to distributing Arab and international auteur films in the Middle East and North Africa.



Marten Rabarts

NEW ZEALAND

Head of EYE International. He translated a background and education in theatre and dance into the independent film industry in New York, L.A. and London in the mid 1980s. Rabarts moved to The Netherlands in the 1990's, where he headed the Binger Filmlab as artistic director for 12 years. In 2012 he moved to Mumbai, having been appointed Head of Development & Training of the NFDC – National Film Development Corporation of India. Rabarts returned to Amsterdam in 2015, to take up the position of Head of EYE International for the promotion of Dutch cinema in world markets.

CINEGOUNA SPRINGBOARD MENTORS



Hala Khalil

EGYPT

Egyptian film director, producer, and screenwriter. Her work includes short films, documentaries, TV series, and feature films. Her films *The Kite* (1997) and *The Best of Times* (2004), have received awards from the Arab Film Festival, Rotterdam Arab Camera Festival, and the Rabat Film Festival.

Khalil belongs to the new generation of Egyptian female commercial and independent filmmakers that emerged in the first decade of the 21st century. The films of this period focus on the everyday lives of Egyptian women and their identity separation from men, functioning as an important part of feminism in Egypt.



Karim Traidia

ALGERIA

Dutch director with Algerian roots. He studied sociology in Paris and at the Netherlands Film Academy in Amsterdam. His first feature *The Polish Bride*, selected at La Semaine de la Critique in Cannes, won 2 Golden Calf in Utrecht, for best director and best actress, the audience award at the IFFR Rotterdam and an award for best European film in Berlin in 1999. *The Polish Bride* was also nominated for the Golden Globe and was the Dutch Entry for the Oscars. After *The Polish Bride* Karim made *Les Diseurs de Vérité* (nominated for the Tiger Awards at Rotterdam, winner of Best Film and Best Actor at Valencia, and jury awards at Carthage, Paris, etc.) and *Eilandgasten*, *De Avondboot*, *Free Game*, *Chronicles of My Village* and *Ghandi the Conspiracy* (release winter 2018).



Miroljub Vučković

SERBIA

Born in 1952, in Serbia. Miroljub Vukovic is a film critic and head of International Relations and Promotion at Film Center Serbia. He is a member of the European Film Academy.

Miroljub was previously the representative of Serbia in Eurimages - European Cinema Support; the acting director of Film Center Serbia, and founder and director of East West Crossings Film Promotion Fund.

He engaged in various researches and projects of the Film Institute such as the retrospective programmes of Yugoslav films at Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, Cinematheque Royale in Brussels, and Giornate del cinema muto in Pordenone. He is an adviser to various international film festivals, was the program director of the Belgrade International Film Festival, and General Manager of Institut za Film (Yugoslav/Serbian Film Institute).

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PROJECTS IN DEVELOPMENT



DIRECTOR
Laila Abbas

Color | 90 min
Arabic

TEAM
Laila Abbas (Director)
Roshanak Nedjad (Producer)
Hanna Atallah (Producer)
TYPE
Feature Narrative Film
TOTAL BUDGET
US \$700,000
CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$63,000

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BARZAKH

Palestine

Log-line

The father of Mariam and Kawthar dies alone in his old house. If his death is declared, his son in America will inherit a larger share of his estate. To hide their father's death, the sisters need to take care of his body.

Synopsis

Mariam and Kawthar find their old father dead in his house on the outskirts of the city of Ramallah. While waiting for the ambulance to take the father to the hospital to complete the procedures and announce his death, Kawthar finds a piece of paper showing he deposited a large amount of money in his bank account two years ago. Mariam knows her father has an ATM card. They cancel the ambulance and rush to the ATM. The good news is there's \$160,000 in his account. The bad news is they can only take out \$3,000 per day. If their brother in America finds out, he's entitled by law to half of this money.

The sisters spend the first hours of their stormy night plotting to find a way to hide the father's death. To hide his death, they need to take care of the body. But for their plan to work, they need to stay away from the old woman living downstairs.

Burying their father ends up being much more complicated than it seemed and luck seems to be looking the other way. The last straw is when the woman living downstairs becomes aware of their plan. When they think they're doomed and all is lost, the old lady downstairs turns out to be the solution to their problems.

Director's Biography

Laila Abbas is a Palestinian filmmaker and academic. She started her career in TV but her passion to tell stories drove her to pursue writing and filmmaking. She studied film & TV producing in Royal Holloway University in the UK. Upon returning to Palestine, Laila worked as an instructor at the Institute of Modern Media at Alquds University for five years.

Laila wrote and directed a documentary and a number of short fiction films. She's now developing her short *Lowest Place on Earth* and her feature film *Barzakh*.

Her filmography includes *The Chair* (2017), *Madam El* (2016), and *Ice & Dust* (2014).



LAILA ABBAS
Director

Director's Statement

Barzakh is a story that is so familiar yet utterly fresh. Stories that deal with familial anxiety, death of the father and inheritance battles are deeply rooted in the minds and conscience of all human beings everywhere. What makes this story unique is the setting and all the complications it brings to the characters. In this story, the characters want the money, but underneath it all, they're actually setting out to fight the system and the laws they see as obsolete and sexist. In Palestine and almost all other Arab countries, men and women are not equal in the eyes of the law especially when it comes to inheritance. *Barzakh* is a film about women and the need for female solidarity to emancipate themselves from their patriarchs.

When the idea of *Barzakh* was born, I was determined to write it in a way that will increase its chances of seeing the light. Relying on a very limited number of characters and locations and having the story take place over the course of one night seemed limiting at first but ended up being the key to writing a condensed drama that gives the audience the chance to go deep into the hearts and minds of the characters.

The story will be told in a visually subtle and naturalistic manner keeping the focus on the characters' thoughts, actions and emotions. Elements of realism will be seen in the lighting, choice of sets, costumes and actors' performances. The aim is to create a raw and authentic film that is also suspenseful and humorous at times.



HANNA ATALLAH
Producer

Producer's Note

Hanna Atallah and I came across this unique project by Laila Abbas during an EAVE (European Audiovisual Entrepreneurs) workshop that was held in Palestine. *Barzakh* deals with a big social issue but it is still quite entertaining and lets you, the audience, breathe so that at the end of the film you actually feel good. This is such a rare thing that we immediately feel attracted to the story.

Barzakh is a drama sprinkled all over with humor and comic relief. I could immediately relate to the premise of the story, to the characters and their conflict. But what really caught my attention were the balance of seriousness and lightness, and, the loving humor in the way Laila portrays the women in her story.

I promised myself at one point in my career, after producing over 35 films with more than 40 awards, to only work on films that I personally would like to watch at the end of a really tiring day; to actually go to the cinema and buy a ticket. In Good Company was founded for exactly that, and *Barzakh* fits perfectly.

The project is now in development and is seeking financing and distribution.



ROSHANAK NEDJAD
Co-Producer

Producer's Filmography

Roshanak began working in the film industry as a festival coordinator and production manager. In 1999, she started her first production company Flying Moon. Until 2014 they produced art-house films with over 40 international awards, among them the German Film Award in Gold and the Prix Europe Iris. In 2015 she started In Good Company in Berlin. The focus of IGC is on international co-productions aiming to entertain on a smart level. Roshanak also works as an expert and consultant for various institutions and training organizations such as EAVE. She's a member of the German as well as the European Film Academy.

Filmography:

2017: Bye Bye Germany

2014: Men Who Save the World

2012: I'm Going to Change My Name

2009: Football Undercover

2008: The Market: A Tale of Trade

2007: 32A



DIRECTOR
Elyes Baccar

Color | 105 min
Arabic

TEAM
Elyes Baccar (Director), Melik
Kochbati (Producer)

TYPE
Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$591,926

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$128,501

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CURFEW

Tunisia

Log-line

Rania, a young rebel, and her conservative family are preparing her engagement ceremony to Sami. A terrorist attack takes place and a curfew is declared. Both families spend the night together. This will further reveal their secrets.

Synopsis

Rania is a 25-year-old rebel coming from a conservative family. She rejects her mother's old customs and traditional ideas regarding her engagement ceremony to Sami, a young man from a bourgeois family living in the capital.

Rania's family assiduously prepare for a big dinner ceremony and rearrange the house and its big garden, creating more room for the guests. Karim, Rania's cousin, sets up a large stage and places a big screen for the attendees to watch the whole ceremony.

Sami's sister, Salma, his parents, and a few other relatives arrive at the colonial house located in the suburbs of Tunis.

Meanwhile, a terrorist attack takes place in the city center resulting in the death of members of the presidential security.

A curfew is declared. Both families hesitate at first but end up choosing to carry on with the ceremony. Impelled by the event, they'll spend the night together. Rania and Selima secretly drink then decide to perform a dance for the guests. Their performance ends, they head to the back of the stage and kiss behind the screen.

Karim mistakenly films them. Both families are shocked after finding out the unbelievable truth. Sami agreed to get engaged to Rania so that she can carry on her relationship with Salma without others knowing.

The scene will have its different consequences on both parties and will further reveal their other secrets.

Director's Biography

Elyes is born in Tunisia. He is an experienced and award winning director of feature films and documentaries. After graduating from film school in Paris and had his English degree in Pasadena USA, he did several Tunisian and international films as assistant director as *Stars Wars* directed by Georges. Then he started his experience in directing short films, TV commercials and stage Play.

From 2005 to 2009 he produced and directed documentaries in France, Pakistan, India, Turkey, Syria, Algeria, Palestine, USA. He won several prizes like the best short documentary in Aljazeera documentary film festival for "*Pakistan 7.6*", "*Music Says...*" and special Jury Price in O'cean Film festival- New Delhi for his long Documentary Film "*Wailing Wall*". *Rouge Parole*, his feature Documentary was acclaimed by international critics and won several prizes.

In 2017 he directed *Tunis by night*, his second fiction film, that won different international awards



ELVES BACCAR
Director

Director's Statement

Curfew is a modern social drama where adversaries evolve in a fragile and bumpy territory. This is what attracts me about the project, contradictions that exist on several levels (woman-man, rich-poor, believer-non-believer, young-old, liberal-conservative, heterosexual-homosexual etc.)

Furthermore, what makes this film essential is that all of the triggers of the conflicts are interlinked whether by a family connection, a professional connection or a social one. All of the characters share the same roof, live through the same tragic event, yet everyone reacts differently. The metaphor is easy to grasp.

It raises several questions at the heart of the Tunisian debates such as individual liberties versus collective power, the power of terror within the Tunisian society, the homosexual relations facing lawmaking, religion and tradition, etc.

The pertinent structure as well as the depth of the characters reunite to make a powerful script, making it a lively, incisive and hard-hitting film.



MELIK KOCHBATI'S
Producer

Producer's Note

In addition to the seven weeks of filming, the film requires a lot of preparation and rehearsal because the actions and sequences of this hyperlinked movie must be perfectly synchronized. The choice of production, in agreement with the director, is to plan rehearsals in situation in order to be more concerned with the acting than its synchronization during the shooting.

The cast will be composed of confirmed leading actors who are able to transcribe, by the subtlety of their acting, the complexity of situations, feelings and emotions in a small environment where all the characters will interact.

Our production strategy is of course relying on the quality of the scenario and the credibility of the project leaders, to obtain the expected funding from the Tunisian Ministry of Culture and Heritage Preservation. Then we will focus on our search for additional funding from the various funds we are eligible for (DFI, Francophonie, South East Vision, etc.), and that we have already obtained elsewhere for previous projects. We also intend to apply for the Tunisian-French co-production fund in its next session in 2019. Finally, we intend to establish partnerships with foreign production companies.



Producer's Filmography

2017: *Whispering Sands*, by Nacer Khemir, *Esprit Noir* by Chakib Taleb Bendiab

2016: *Seul a Seul* by Heni Hnana, *Film Inverse* by Wissem Tlili

2014: *Sang Froid* by Chakib Taleb Bendiab

2013: *Peau de Colle* by Kaouther Ben Hania

2012: *Les Profondeurs* by Youssef Chebbi

2011: *Vers Le Nord* by Youssef Chebbi



DIRECTOR
Sarah Francis

Color | 90 min
Arabic

TEAM
Sarah Francis (Director,
Producer)

TYPE
Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$502,954

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$56,569

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DEAD DOG

Lebanon

Log-line

When Farid, a 58-year-old man living abroad, visits his wife in the country, he learns that their dog has died but no one informed him. Old tensions arise, and Aida learns that her husband is returning home for good.

Synopsis

When Farid, a 58-year-old emigrant, visits his wife Aida for a few days in their second home in the mountains, he learns that his dog died after apparently being shot by someone in the village several months ago, but no one informed him. When they go to the location where the body is supposedly buried, they discover that the mountain has become a granite quarry. On the way back, Farid reveals the purpose of his visit: he is planning to return home for good after years spent abroad. Farid is in a sentimental mood and determined to reconnect with his wife, but Aida resists his romanticism, preferring to cling to the pre-established order. In the village, there's a funeral and a celebration. Playful children appear and disappear around Aida, like an omen. Tensions arise when she accidentally learns that due to financial problems, her husband is trying to sell their main residence in Beirut and to settle with her in this inherited mountain house. When he finds the remains of his dog and buries them in their garden, Aida brings the rifle and engages in a grotesque act in front of the neighbor then reaches out to friends and family asking for support in Farid's financial difficulties. Their attempt at reconnecting has failed this time. Farid solemnly sets his dog's grave on fire; and takes a taxi to the airport. His visit is over, but soon, he'll visit again.

Director's Biography

Sarah grew up and studied in Beirut. Since 2005, she has worked as a freelance director and has participated in several workshops and labs. *Birds of September* (2013), her self-produced feature-length documentary had its premiere in the competition of CPH:DOX, then screened at over 30 international festivals and museums (Art of the Real - Lincoln Center, Dubai International Film Festival, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, etc.), and won several awards. She is now directing and producing an essay film with the support of the Culture Resource Fund and developing several projects. It is her first narrative feature.



SARAH FRANCIS
Director, Producer

Director's Statement

Years ago, I remember carefully watching a couple in their 60's one night. They had recently married after respective failed relationships, and they seemed happy together. Slowly, the man started drinking glass after glass, which seemed to be an old habit of his, and embarrassed himself in public. Instead of reprimanding him or holding him back, his wife was caring and gentle. It was as if she had accepted that she could only access parts of him. My young 20-year-old self longing for fusion and total understanding sat there pondering on whether it was wisdom and respect or if it was compromise. With time, I remain fascinated by human relationships and by the part our imagination plays in the creation of a personal story. What images, often fixed in time, do we rely on to construct our lives and how do we engage or get lost in endless role-plays, while failing to grasp a solid reality? How do we manage to live despite - or thanks to - the maze of expectations, distance and misunderstandings? The film captures a couple that is fluttering but unable to fly, and we progressively understand that this is a round among countless other ones. It is this flutter, this temporary possibility bound to fail, that I am interested to film. I am interested in telling a story while exploring the possibilities of cinematic language. Here, Aida and Farid progressively lose their absolute monopoly on the film and become inscribed in an organic net of life and death.

Producer's Note

Migration is a global issue. Lebanon is a country of about 4 million inhabitants while the diaspora counts between 10 and 14 million people around the globe. Throughout generations, often the man worked abroad while the rest of the family remained in the country. *Dead Dog* is not the story of a man who wants to emigrate but rather the story of that man, 15 years later, when he tries to return home. Is it really possible to come back? And where does he belong? The couple of Aida and Farid is also representative of a middle class slowly disappearing in a country in constant regression. Although still sheltered from extreme misery, Aida is alienated; she hides in her bubble, in a car, a house, while public space is irreversibly shrinking and while social life and family structures are falling apart. It tackles local matters (the quarry for example, is one of 3000 other ones, illegally changing the country's landscape to provide concrete for Beirut's canyons of anarchic high-rise apartments, since the end of the war), while it resonates with global issues such as migration. However, most importantly, the film speaks the universal language of intimate relationships. The project has the potential of reaching a wide audience while embracing the craftsmanship of an auteur film.

Filmography

2014: *Nawal's Ritual*

2013: *Birds of September'*



DIRECTOR

**Mohamed Sabbah,
Danielle Davi**

Color | 80 min

Arabic

EMBODIED CHORUS

Lebanon

Log-line

An HIV-positive woman and a gay man experience living with sexually transmitted infections in Lebanon. They engage with others to wake up to the feeling that everything is possible.

TEAM

Danielle Davie (Director),
Mohamed Sabbah (Director),
Yara Abi Nader (Producer),
Julia Wagner (Producer)

TYPE

Feature Documentary Film

TOTAL BUDGET

USD \$252,000

CONFIRMED FINANCING

USD \$40,800

Synopsis

Danielle, who lives with HIV, seizes life in her filmed diary. Mohamed poetically explores the physical and sensual struggle he had with HPV. Together, they dialogue and break the silence around STI (Sexually Transmitted Infections) in Lebanon, and unveil other individuals' experiences, forming a chorus of humans aspiring to beauty.

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Directors' Biography

Danielle Davie

Danielle Davie is a PhD-holder documentary filmmaker and visual anthropologist. Her short films about the Bedouin habitations in Syria were screened at ethnographic international festivals. Danielle is now a coordinator and lecturer at ALBA-UOB, USEK and UL universities in Lebanon, while she works on her own documentaries and experimental videos.

Mohamed Sabbah

Mohamed Sabbah is a Lebanese filmmaker. His films deal with body relationships, death, family and politics. Mohamed completed a feature fiction, *Chronic*, in 2017. His previous films have been selected in and won prizes at several international festivals.



DANIELLE DAVI & MOHAMED SABBABH
Co-Directors

Directors' Statement

We, Danielle and Mohamed, both faced STIs that changed our perception of bodies - in terms of personal construction and our place in our society.

The subject of STIs is taboo in Lebanon. Our project gives a voice to people who had or are currently living with STIs. It is not the goal of this film to expose traumas or portray stories in order to prevent such infections. It rather aims to understand how to make one's wound natural to the point of integrating it into one's life.

We both have a strong urge to make this film. It is a personal and artistic need to accomplish a new step on our journeys, and a need to share and explore the path of a body that carried or still carries an STI. We translate our own stories and the stories we collect to a narrative and a visual experimentation. Working together adds a dialogue dimension to the film, and brings a wider layer of questions and reflections. We are building the core of this film.

Through our work, we wish to transcend the constraints imposed on the body, by placing the subject in the public space and thus universalizing it.



YARA ABI NADER & JULIA WAGNER
Co-Producers

Producers' Note

It is a creative documentary breaking taboos in Lebanon and normalizing what is not the most comfortable subject to talk about, regardless of where in the world we are, and however "open" the society around us might look. We want to be part of this project and bring it to life and the big screen. Embodied *Chorus* opens an enriching dialogue across art, film, social and cultural understanding. Through the vivid diversity Danielle and Mohamed bring into this project, it merges a narrative we, as producers and individuals, believe in, and want to create visibility for. Together, the four of us have experienced a critical and fruitful exchange since we started working on Embodied *Chorus*, taking both the film and our relation to new levels. We want to spread this film as wide as possible, to really meet all potential audiences with the right partners. Therefore, we have built a production structure between Lebanon and Germany with the ambition to be seen and perceived internationally.

Producers' Filmography

Yara Abi Nader

2017: Chronic

2017: Take 18

2014: Where There Is Nothing but Water

Julia Wagner

2018: What Doesn't Kill Us

2014: Dark Sugar

2012: The White Treasure



DIRECTOR
Mehdi Hmili

Color | 100 min
Arabic

TEAM
Mehdi Hmili (Director),
Abdallah Chamekh (Director),
Moufida Fedhila (Producer),
Michel Balagué (Co-Producer)

TYPE
Feature Documentary Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$256,000

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$40,000

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FOULEDH

Tunisia

Log-line

In the biggest steel factory in Tunisia, we follow the fate of four workers who suffer from psychological and physical disorders in their struggle for survival.

Synopsis

In the biggest steel factory of Tunisia, we follow the fate of four workers who suffer from psychological and physical disorders in their struggle for survival during a strike.

Following the explosion of an oven that caused the death of their colleague, four men with four different and moving stories in which we discover a strange world that has been revoked by people of different age groups, demand to include their company in the hazardous professions and early retirement.

In the meantime, the factory workers are aware of the intentions of the company's management to privatize it on the pretext of bankruptcy. The strike starts with a debate about their health problems.

Director's Biography

Mehdi Hmili was born in Tunis and graduated from the Paris Film School. While in France, he directed his trilogy in black-and-white about love and exile: *X-Moment* (2009), *Li-La* (2011) and *The Night of Badr* (2012). His first feature-length film, *Thala mon amour* (2016), a drama that takes place in the city of Thala during the Tunisian Revolution, was part of the official selections of the Carthage, Rome, Angers and Torino Film Festivals.

Hmili is also a popular poet in Tunisia, known for his poems against the regime of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. A former football player, Hmili recounts his own story in *Streams*, his second feature-length film currently in development.



MEHDI HMILI
Director

Director's Statement

The film will be centered on daily living facts drawn from the spontaneity of the characters who live their daily events, to create a climate of privacy and documentation close to the reality of the characters. It relies on the internal space of the events that will reveal the imprisoned self within the psychology of the characters. Thus, the camera will be in a self-oriented relationship with the central characters, and will work on a fast rhythm in the narration of events and their synthesis. The movement will initially start in a slow pace to express the routines and the daily lives of the characters inside the plant. So the meaning changes shape in all its depth through the editing, in order to present a parallel aspect of storytelling. It constructs a new meaning by using various shots as an expressive device, adding a psychological edge to the scenes.

At the end, it will create a rhythm and add a dramatic dimension built on the double meanings.

This film is crucial for me, for my characters who risk losing their lives at any moment. It's five years of hard work. This film will be like a punch in the face, it will not make any concession, neither aesthetic or dramatic; it will be cruel and beautiful, funny and tender, shocking and subversive. Just like the life of workers in the Menzel Bourguiba Steel Factory... this is the Fouledh life.



MOUFIDA FEDHILA
Producer

Producer's Note

It is a film that deals with an important subject: that of the influence of capitalism on the individual, and of the consequences that result from it on people and on the Tunisian society in transition. This film is about an explosive encounter with a reality far from the cameras of the media, which questions the urgency of "living."

The entire film will be shot inside the factory. This is a cinematic tour de force. It's an unprecedented visual and human experience. It's a film that requires preparation to be ready to capture the emotions of the characters. We plan to shoot with the characters while they work, to place the camera within the heat of the fire of the factory. The director and his cinematographer carefully prepared this work. Our job as producers is to ensure that the poetic truth of the film is preserved from the first frame to the last one. This film is a challenging experience and we are very excited to initiate such a cinematic adventure.

We strongly believe that it has a powerful story to tell to the world and we all need to hear it now. At the same time, we are also very confident that the creative approach of our writers/directors will bring an innovative and unique feature to the story, managing to make the film reach an international audience.



Producer's Filmography

Michel Balagué is the co-founder of the production company Mengamuk Films, which produces feature films, documentaries and artistic projects that tread new paths in form and content.

In 2013, Balagué produced *Sieniawka* by Marcin Malaszczyk, which premiered at the 63rd Berlinale, won the first film prize in FID Marseille and the Arte Prize at Duisburg Filmwoche, and was released in Germany in May 2014. He also co-produced *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea* by Mais Darwazah, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival, was in the competition of CPH:DOX, and received many awards at various international film festivals.

In addition, Balagué has founded the super 8 & 16mm collective LaborBerlin e.V., he has collaborated with several art institutions around the world and worked as a DOP on numerous films for which he received several awards. Balagué produced in 2016 *The Last Days of the City* by acclaimed Egyptian filmmaker Tamer El Said.

Michel Balagué lives and works in Berlin.



DIRECTOR
Rashid Masharawi

Color | 90 min
Arabic

TEAM
Rashid Masharawi (Director,
Producer), Mohamed Al
Daradji (Producer)

TYPE
Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET
€1,100,000

CONFIRMED FINANCING
€523,000

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GAZA DC

Palestine

Log-line

A love story takes place in Gaza, between a Palestinian man and an American woman from Washington who arrived with a delegation of foreign solidarity activists. The cultural and political contradictions, as well as the difference in customs and traditions, misunderstandings and wrong analysis; add absurdity, humor and complexity to the story.

Synopsis

'*Gaza D.C.* addresses a love story that takes place in Gaza between a young Palestinian from a refugee camp in the sieged Strip, and a young American woman from Washington D.C, who arrives with a delegation of international activists in support of the Gazans.

In parallel to the evolving love story between the two, the woman falls in love with the place and the guy's traditional, simple family. While the two are busy planning for their marriage, the woman's parents along with the U.S. government believe she's in Gaza against her own free will. Despite the fact that the woman puts enormous efforts into convincing her parents that she's not being forced to stay in Gaza, but on the contrary she's having a beautiful real love story; the parents refuse to believe her story because of their fear of losing their only child. Nevertheless, the political tension in the region is neither promising nor comforting; Gaza is being besieged by the Israeli occupation and ruled by the Islamic government of Hamas.

The cultural and political paradoxes and contradictions, the huge differences between the traditions of each family, the series of unpleasant individual misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the reality, in addition to constant intervention of the Gazan society and the U.S. government, are all elements that add drama yet facetiousness to the story.

Gaza D.C. is a film inspired by reality, about life and love in a place where people and dreams are under siege.

Director's Biography

After a decade of working and establishing a name as a filmmaker, Masharawi founded in 1996 the Cinema Production and Distribution Center (CPC) in Ramallah.

While his features such as *Curfew*, *Haifa*, *Ticket to Jerusalem* and documentaries such as the recent *Live From Palestine* have received international television broadcasting, awards and critical recognition; Masharawi has remained in the past decades living and producing within the Occupied Territories. Although he considers himself more as an artist and director rather than a Palestinian partisan.

"What I have been trying to do is make out of the Palestinian situation a cinema. I have something like 15 films, between features, shorts, and documentaries, and together I feel they can offer a mirror and document of the Palestinian life in the last 20 years."

His feature films have been studied in Israeli Academy of Cinema, Harvard University and other universities in Los Angeles.



RASHID MASHARAWI
Director

Director's Statement

To create a cinematic language that serves the story visually, to keep the rare and special atmosphere, to translate the characters' psyche and rhythm, the scenes will be composed of external events from long shots through a moving camera that follows the event without the need for much chopping.

The camera movement and speed will be used to display an enriched cinematic presentation which serves the visual narrative, and to create a real living atmosphere throughout the film. Long camera shots with speedy camera movements and sometimes a shaking and tense motion will be used to reflect the general tension which accompanies the characters' and locations' livelihood and atmosphere. This tension is dominant in all the exterior scenes which are three quarters of the total scenes in the film. The exterior scenes will rely on big groups of people as well. Meanwhile, in the interior scenes the camera will move less, the shots will be shorter timewise and the general atmosphere will be calmer in relevance to the fact that one of the lead characters is deaf and mute.

The locations of both the interior and exterior scenes will depend on modest and only necessary set/décor, which will serve the story line and will help expose the various stages, places and characters' evolution in the story. The set will reflect the psychology of the characters and their relationship to different times and places. The characters' vision and narrative will be mirrored through the different designs and the architecture shown in various locations.

Different dimensions of light will be used in different locations to create the ecstatic feeling in the film. In the exterior scenes, natural light will be used. In the interior scenes, the concept of light and set will emphasize the psychological feeling of the characters' instability and vulnerability. Light and set will resemble the individuals' and the society's disability of communication.

The sound of locations, events and characters will mainly rely on the original sound which will be taken during the shooting of the scenes. However, the original music of the film will be calm and will rely on limited musical instruments which can display a contradiction with the music and songs that are used in the scenes.

The editing will have speedy shots of the exterior scenes but with slower rhythm of shots when the camera is taking the characters' state of mind, emotions and reactions. The interior scenes are highly dominated by the immense presence of the lead characters which will affect the rhythm of editing of the interior scenes. The editing of the interior will be related to the characters, events, the major turning points, the development of the characters, and the impact of the events on the dramatic build-up in the film.



MOHAMED AL DARADJI
Producer

Producer's Filmography

2017: War Nest, The Journey

2015: Kingdom of Garbage

2014: Dark to Dark, The Iraqi Superman

2013: Red Lips, Nasma's Pigeons, War Canister, Children of God, Children of War, In the Sands of Babylon, Gift of My Father, Happy Birthday

2011: In My Mother's Arms

2010: My Name Is Mohammed, Kosher

2009: Son of Babylon

2008: Chthonic, War, Love, God & Madness

2006: Dreams



DIRECTOR
Ahmed Yassin

Color | 90 min
Arabic

TEAM
Ahmed Yassin Al Daradji
(Director), Margaret Glover
(Producer)

TYPE
Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$350,000

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$60,000

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HANGING GARDENS

Iraq

Log-line

When 12-year-old As'ad adopts an American sex doll, he crosses into a red zone where he finds himself caught in the crossfire among the defenders of humanism, commercialism and fundamentalism in his working-class Baghdad neighborhood.

Synopsis

As'ad (12) and adoptive brother Taha (28) scrape a living transforming trash from Baghdad's dumps into treasure. While Taha focuses on scrap to sell by weight, As'ad chases U.S. Embassy trucks with their rich – taboo – pickings.

As'ad rescues an American sex doll from certain destruction, takes her home, washes and clothes her; and then presents her to Taha as a thing of beauty. Taha assaults him for defiling the moral code, and As'ad takes the doll to live with him in an abandoned military tank in *Hanging Gardens*.

When Amir (20) discovers As'ad's "American girl," the entrepreneur spots her potential and tempts As'ad into business by promoting him as his partner. Reluctant to expose his treasure to inexperienced groping from local boys, As'ad imposes a strict protocol.

As business rockets, Amir becomes reckless with greed and As'ad realises he's being used. As'ad takes the doll back to the tank but it's too late. Even Taha wakes up to the tribal patriarch's plan to scapegoat As'ad. Taha tries to bring As'ad back into line but his "little brother" must find his own way through Iraq's toxic mix of God, love, war and madness.

The patriarch gives his blessing for Amir to settle their score by torching As'ad's tank. The burnt hulk becomes the patriarch's monument to the consequences of eating from the forbidden fruits of *Hanging Gardens*.

As'ad buries his treasure in Baghdad's children's cemetery with the inscription, "here lies As'ad's Salwah (meaning comfort); abused by many, loved by one."

Director's Biography

Iraqi writer-director Ahmed Yassin Al Daradji currently lives in between Iraq and the UK, where he works for a film production agency. The success of his short film *My Name* is Mohammed earned Ahmed a place at London Film School, where he received an MA with distinction in 2013 for *Children of God*. The lead in that short film is now 20 years old and will play the role of Amir in *Hanging Gardens*. In 2015, Ahmed produced and co-directed a feature documentary, *Servant of Baghdad*, currently being updated with support from Greenhouse Film Centre, a Mideast documentary development programme. *Stray*, Ahmed's first UK-based short film, explores themes of displacement through the lens of an Iraqi boy's friendship with an abandoned dog. He was selected for the Berlinale Talents 2018.



AHMED YASSIN AL DARADJI
Director

Director's Statement

My story dates from the aftermath of the American occupation. While radical militias competed to control our lives, I was studying medicine at Baghdad University. One day a classmate invited me into the toilets and presented me with a sex doll on loan from a relative working for the U.S. forces. None of us had ever seen anything like her. She passed from embrace to embrace, offering male students the only release for instincts suppressed by social and religious norms at a time when love was equal to death. The transition for Iraqi society post-2003 is completely surreal – perfect raw material for cinematic adaptation. As I prepare to shoot *Hanging Gardens*, I'm inspired by Emir Kusturica, Bahman Gobadi and Barry Jenkins. My film's rhythm and pace will take their cue from As'ad, the way he moves, the music he loves. The camera will focus on what matters to As'ad. Viewers will see the world through his curious gaze as it takes in the darkness to find beauty in the midst of desolation. As with my short films, I'll work with people who are living the events of my film. They are the experts in the film's conflicts, themes and action and my creative partners alongside the HoDs. My goal is to portray their story with intimacy, integrity and vitality so that audiences will connect emotionally. My hope is that audiences will also understand continuing foreign military interventions across the Middle East from a human and compassionate perspective.



MARGARET GLOVER
Producer

Producer's Note

This project's valuable assets are its vitality, integrity and authenticity. While rooted in a specific landscape, the action is motivated by basic human drives and the dream of freedom. My goal is to deliver a film whose currency will connect with Middle Easterners and whose universality will resonate for international audiences. To achieve this we need to engage key players in the Arab industry and then target European partners to access regional funds for post-production. The project's strength owes much to professional input received during 2017 Rawi Screenwriters' Lab and Med Film Factory's Directors' Lab, and from recent feedback from my own network who've had success with local material in the international market. My journey with Ahmed began at London Film School, where I oversaw development through delivery of graduation films (2008/13-). Our three-week reconnaissance of Baghdad locations, facilities and crew in March of this year cemented our partnership and gave me the insight and courage necessary to deliver a revised screenplay that tells the story Ahmed wants to tell within realistic parameters for a first feature. Revision focused as much attention on the reality of shooting this film as on key story and on-screen elements that will engage audiences who know nothing of the film's storyworld and characters. I'm confident that with Duraid Munajim as our cinematographer and a European editor on board from pre-production, we can deliver value on screen from a five-week shoot on location in Baghdad.



Producer's Filmography

Award-winning writer-producer Margaret Glover began her career in American theatre before moving to London and working for a decade in UK television. Margaret's film credits include work with international directors, including *India's Subhash Ghai*. She has been instrumental in the development and production of numerous first features from writer-directors in the UK and EU that have won prizes and attracted international audiences at festivals, online and in distribution. In addition to her role as development producer and co-writer on Ahmed Al Daradji's feature debut, Margaret is currently collaborating with French producer Jean-Christophe Barret and also works as script consultant for The Royal Film Commission in Jordan, on regionally funded European features, and with UK-based artist filmmakers, Eelyn Lee and Roz Mortimer.

2017: *The Invisible Word*, *Undocument*

2016: *BitterSuite*, *The Book of Gabrielle*, *The Treasure Seekers*

2013: *Blackbird*

1996: *Faith*



DIRECTOR
Ayten Amen

Color | 90 min
Arabic

TEAM
Ayten Amen (Director), Mark Lotfy (Producer), Mohamed Hefzy (Co-Producer), Dora Bouchoucha (Co-Producer)

TYPE
Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$300,000

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$150,000

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SOAD

Egypt

Log-line

In the aftermath of her suicide, Soad's younger sister goes on a journey in search for answers.

Synopsis

In the marginalized town of Zagazig, Egypt, 19-year-old Soad lives with her reserved family alongside her little sister, Rabab. Soad, obsessed with her image and looks, constantly lies about her life to strangers and friends. In her lies, she projects the images of an imaginary life she wishes to have; an ambition being slowly crushed by her reality.

In a series of small incidents that lead up to a fight with one of her friends, causing her to be depressed, Soad jumps off the balcony in an act of courage and defiance. In the aftermath of Soad's death, silence swallows everything and everyone, but Soad's little sister Rabab, 11 years old, is determined to understand what nobody is talking about, the cause of her death.

Ahmed, a popular blogger and activist from the city of Alexandria, is the highlight of Soad's secret life. When Ahmed posts a random image of his broken down car, he receives thousands of likes. What made such a popular guy interested in Soad, or was he only manipulating her? Rabab is set to find answers to these questions, with an underlying desire to live her sister's dream and visit the magical city of Alexandria in an attempt to understand her sister's complicated relationship with Ahmed.

Director's Biography

Ayten Amen was born in 1978, in Alexandria, Egypt. She graduated from the French school *La Mère De Dieu* in 1995, and from Faculty of Commerce in 1999. She studied film criticism in Cinema Writers and Critics Association 200 and cinema independently in Art Lab - The American University in Cairo (2004 - 2006).

She directed a number of publicity films for many institutions, such as WHO and UN. She won the Cairo Film Connection Prize for best project with *Villa 69* in 2010, which was selected in the Pavillion Des Cinémas du Monde, at the Cannes Film Festival 2011. It also won the Hubert Bals Fund award in 2011 in South Africa. In 2017/2018-, she directed 20 episodes of the hit series *7th Neighbor*, which became a big hit on Egyptian Television.



AYTEN AMEN
Director

Director's Statement

During my childhood, a friend's sister committed suicide, which was a dramatic event that we never talked about, because our teachers at school had a meeting with us specifically asking us, as children, not to bring up the subject. Until I graduated from school, I never mentioned it.

Recently, in 2014, one of my friends committed suicide and again something similar happened, no one talked about it. Even though this was after radical and far-reaching political and societal changes had taken place in Egypt, and we believed people were becoming more open; we could still not talk about it. We spent months trying to avoid it, and one day, when we discussed the subject, one of my friends specifically asked us not to tell other people that it was a suicide – it was still considered to be a shameful act.

Inspired by my childhood friend whom I never had the chance to comfort, my goal on the one hand is to explore how she dealt with the tragedy of her sister's suicide, with no one willing to talk about the subject; and on the other hand to reveal the context and the subtext of the daily life of someone who commits suicide.



MARK LOTFY
Producer

Producer's Note

Suicide is a sensitive, complex and absolutely major taboo presently in the Middle East with numbers rising steeply especially among young Arab women. I see, on a larger scale as a keen writer and researcher in subjects like relationships among socio-political structures and hierarchies re-presented by social media and virtual reality in general, that Arab women are in ongoing reflexive turmoil state of suicide accepting the oppressive social and personal norms they experience on a daily basis.

From this perspective, the physical suicide of the Arab woman could be seen, tragically, as her salvation from more broad and inclusive human suicide, because she refuses to live these utterly painful circumstances, and that tragic situation urges me – as an Egyptian producer and writer, and more importantly, human being – to act accordingly, in a responsible way, towards this cause.

When I read the *Soad* script, I felt instantly that it intersects with this sensitive subject and my deep concerns around it, in a fresh, sensitive and original way. I've touched through it the suffering of young Egyptian people, especially young women, caused by social and religious conservatism espoused with political frustration, and I felt obliged to have a role in this fresh cinematic message, chiefly because the world of cinema hasn't dealt enough with this subject internationally.



Producer's Filmography

Founder and manager of Fig Leaf Studios in Alexandria, Egypt, since 2005. The studio produces feature films, short films, documentaries and visual art. It promotes independent cinema and art movement in Alexandria, in addition to supporting contemporary artists and filmmakers through capacity-building and technical exchange of expertise with international artists and organizations. Films produced by Fig Leaf were officially selected by international film festivals such as Venice and Sao Paolo.

2016: Cheerful Giver

2015: Expired, Under the Pyramid, The Visit, Dream Away, Ramady, I Have a Picture

2014: Al Araba Al Madfuna II

2013: Mice Room

2012: Ahlam

2011: Microphone

2008: Atef



DIRECTOR
Ihab Jadallah

Color | 90 min
Arabic

TEAM
Ihab Jadallah(Director), Marisa
Meier(Producer)

TYPE
Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$560,000

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$220,000

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THE DOUBT

Palestine

Log-line

After being sentenced to 12 years in prison, the Palestinian topographer Ibrahim faces his wife and son for the first time in years. While society celebrates him as a hero, a freed prisoner who carries the grief of a nation, he and his family have to cope with the fact that he has become a broken, distrusting man, whose only chance of happiness lies in a new beginning.

Synopsis

Ibrahim, a Palestinian topographer is sentenced to 12 years in prison. His wife Amal bravely builds up her own business as a wedding videographer to make a living. Another tragedy hits the family when the couple loses their only child Wasef in a car accident. As many other prisoner-families they smuggle Ibrahim's sperm out of the prison. The artificial insemination works and Amal gives birth to their second child Yousef.

When Ibrahim is finally freed, he meets Yousef for the very first time. But instead of feeling relieved and free, Ibrahim finds it hard to adapt. Daily routine has changed, as has the way people deal with occupation. He feels useless next to Amal, who provides for the family now. He is haunted by the loss of Wasef, whom he never could say goodbye to. He projects his late memory on Yousef but he cannot find any resemblance. A sinister doubt grows inside of Ibrahim: Is he actually Yousef's father? Ibrahim built himself a prison of doubt he can't be freed of. He gets aggressive and harsh when Amal and Yousef are not willing to let him destroy the family they exhaustingly built up during his absence.

Director's Biography

Award-winning Palestinian filmmaker and producer Ihab Jadallah has written, directed, and produced several highly acclaimed short films and documentaries. His works have been screened in more than 60 countries and at more than 100 festivals, museums and art galleries around the globe, and include *The Shooter* (2007), which has won several awards, in addition to *The Flower Seller* (2010), a thriller set in the West Bank, which was selected for competition at the Clermont-Ferrand International Film Festival and the Abu Dhabi Film Festival.

Ihab has also received the Producer Award at the Dubai Film Connection in 2009 for the film *Off Frame AKA Revolution Until Victory*. He is the winner of the Cité Des Arts residency (Paris, 2014) and Akademie Solitude residency (Stuttgart, 2017).

Born and raised in East Jerusalem, Jadallah is currently working on *The Doubt*, a full-length feature film, whose script has been selected for the Sundance Screenwriting Lab 2018, the EICTV Film Lab 2016 and the AFAC Development Fund Award (2015)



IHAB JADALLAH
Director

Director's Statement

The Doubt is the story of a character that has been roaming in my head for a couple of years now. The character of Ibrahim, who is inspired by my own father. When my father came out of prison he was a completely different person to me, not as warm and close as he used to be. As a child I used to imagine that this man is not my real father but someone who is inhabiting my father's body, and will soon unmask himself to reveal his true identity.

In *The Doubt* it's the father that suspects his own identity. He questions his fatherhood, the connection to his son. It's not a coincidence that during the development and pre-production I myself became a father for the very first time. Therefore I am beginning to understand what this role takes, what it means and how it is changing me.

The movie will be shot in Beit Safafa, a small and beautiful village in the southwest hills of Jerusalem, where my family has lived for generations. It was here at home when the first moving images took shape in my head. When I felt out of place and desired a refuge I would go to a local Israeli cinema not too far away. These are the fondest memories of my childhood and the beginning of my passion for filmmaking. It has always been a desire to shoot in Beit Safafa, where it seems so easy to feel at home yet so fragile, so it's really hard to build one. It's the perfect environment for the very personal story of *The Doubt*.

This project includes feelings, thoughts and visions I am carrying with me for a very long time. I now feel ready to carry out those visions and share it with an international audience.



MARISA MEIER
Producer

Producer's Note

When I met Ihab Jadallah in a bookstore in Jerusalem, I was already filled up to the brim with impressions of Palestine and stories that should be shared. The story of *The Doubt* left a bigger impact. I see a special potential in this project; the journey of a man, who becomes homeless in an emotional sense. I witnessed one of the longest prisoner strikes during the spring of 2017 and how Palestinian society celebrates freed prisoners as heroes. When I met some of them, I realized that they often can't live up to that image. It seems like another prison they are locked into. This drama needs to be shown on screen in a tragic but finally truthful way. The fact that prisoners smuggle their sperm to their wives became a common thing in Palestine. *The Doubt* deals with the relationship between those kids and their parents. We have seen Palestinian movies about sadness, anger, violence and walls. It's about time we show another side of this country; the dramatic emotional story about a broken man alongside a strong woman. I got attached as the producer at Aanat Films. My connections to Europe will be helpful in funding the project internationally. Due to his earlier work and his participation in Torino Film and Sundance Lab (amongst others), Ihab is well known in the international co-production market. I strongly believe in the universal success of this movie because it works with classical dramaturgy and shows a never-seen world.



Producer's Filmography

Marisa Meier was born in Zurich in 1992. She discovered her passion for storytelling and visual expression early in life. After working for On Line Video 46 and Snap Film AG in Zurich, she moved to Germany to study international producing at the Filmakademie Baden-Wuerttemberg in 2013. She took part in exchange programs and masterclasses at La Fémis in Paris, UCLA in Los Angeles and at Al Quds University in Ramallah. During her studies, she kept working as a production assistant for Dschoint Ventschr Filmproduktion and Tell Film in Switzerland. Having produced award-winning shorts and documentary features, she joined Aanat Films in 2017 as a producer for international projects.

2018: Closing Time

2016: Genkingen – Ein Schwäbisches Volksmärchen, Un état d'urgence

2015: Cornerstories

2014: Ich zünd dir nen Mercedes an, Out of the Wild (commercial)



DIRECTOR
Kaouther Ben Hania

Color | 100 min
Arabic, English

TEAM
Kaouther Ben Hania (Director),
Habib Attia (Producer)
Nadim Cheikhrouha (Producer)

TYPE
Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$1,971,171

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$951,971

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THE MAN WHO SOLD HIS SKIN

Tunisia

Log-line

Sam Ali, a Syrian refugee in Lebanon, is unable to join his beloved Abeer in Paris where she lives.

In Beirut, Sam Ali meets Jeffrey Godefro, a famous contemporary artist, who makes him a piece of art internationally sought after.

Synopsis

Sam Ali, a Syrian young man who is sensitive, impulsive, true and rough, takes refuge in Lebanon to flee the Syrian war. Without legal status, he is unable to have a Schengen visa to go to Paris where his beloved Abeer lives. He then spends his time playing the scrounger in the art galleries of Beirut. And it is in one of these galleries that he meets Jeffrey Godefro, the most scandalous American artist and the most valued figure in the contemporary art market.

The two men conclude a strange deal that will upset the life of Sam Ali forever.

The artist makes of Sam Ali his work by tattooing a Schengen visa on his back. The status of Sam Ali then turns from a mere "illegal" person to a work of art with worldwide popularity, able to circulate freely. But for him, only his devouring passion counts. It is only passion that guides his choices.

From the Louvre to the art galleries of New York through the hell of the Islamic State (ISIS), Sam Ali remains true, upright and in love. However, his dignity is stained; his destiny is put through the mill.

How to get out of this trap, how to regain the esteem of Abeer, how to become a man again when one is pushed into the status of a commercial good? This is the dilemma of Sam Ali, the man who sold his skin.

Director's Biography

Tunisian director Kaouther Ben Hania studied cinema in Tunisia and in Paris (La Fémis and Sorbonne). She directed several shorts including *Wooden Hand*, which had a long and successful run on the international festival circuit.

Challat of Tunis, her first feature film, opened the ACID section at the Cannes Film Festival 2014.

Her latest documentary *Zineb Hates the Snow*, shot during 6 years between Tunisia and Canada, premiered in the official selection of the Locarno Film Festival 2016 and won several awards including the Golden Tanit at the Carthage Film Festival 2016 and Best Documentary at the CINEMED Montpellier 2016.

Her latest feature film *Beauty and the Dogs* premiered at the 2017 Cannes Film Festival's official selection Un Certain Regard and has been distributed in more than 20 countries.



KAOUTHER BEN HANIA
Director

Director's Statement

This project was born from the encounter between two worlds, between two universes. Two universes that are in reality separate and even hermetically sealed – but where my imagination went at length, to cross over, mixing them together to create this film.

The first universe is inspired by the work of Belgian artist Wim Delvoye and the second universe is inspired by the lives and testimonies of several Syrian refugees. I've seen Wim Delvoye's artwork "Tim 2006" at the Louvre Museum in 2012. A young man sitting on a chair showing us his back with a tattoo. It was the first point of departure for this project. I wanted to penetrate the mind of somebody who became a work of art. But the elements of this story remained disembodied until the moment I met Syrian refugees, all of whom had problems of legal papers.

I then asked myself the question of the basic dramatic "what if" that gives rise to stories: what would happen if a renowned artist would offer a refugee to become his artwork to solve his paper problems?

Thus was born Sam Ali. And so the combined portraits of several refugees became the pulse and impulse of the story that began to come to life thanks to a main character who orchestrated my synthesis and my feelings towards the strangeness of our times.



HABIB ATTIA, NADIM CHEIKHROUHA
Producer

Producer's Note

The Man Who Sold His Skin is Kaouther Ben Hania's fourth feature film, produced by Cinetelefilms after *Challat of Tunis* (2013), *Zineb Hates the Snow* (2016) and *Beauty and the Dogs* (2017), which screened at the official selection of *Un Certain Regard*, Cannes 2017.

It is absolutely natural to renew a successful experience. Of course, there is the human side of a collaboration that works wonderfully well and the success of the three first films, at festivals as well as in movie theaters, in Tunisia, France and around the world.

The first three films were distributed in several dozen countries but this new project has an even more international scope than the preceding ones. Indeed, with *The Man Who Sold His Skin*, Kaouther Ben Hania signs a universal piece of work that will be filmed in the East and the West, a mixture expertly balanced between a poignant love story, the tragedy of refugees and the ruthless world of contemporary art.

Beauty and the Dogs started its brilliant international career in the official selection of the *Un Certain Regard* category at Cannes 2017, has won multiple prizes and received an outstanding press reception and an enthusiastic public reception.

Our goal with this new project, which is more ambitious, more international and which will be shot in several countries, is to compete in Cannes or Berlin or Venice, and be part of the most important festivals in every region of the world like Toronto, Sundance, Tribeca or Busan.



Producer's Filmography

Habib Attia is Managing director of Cinetelefilms (founded in 1983), one of the leading production companies in Tunisia and the region. Cinetelefilms has produced some of the biggest blockbusters in Tunisian and Arab cinema.

2018: *We Could Be Heroes* by Hind Bensari

2017: *Beauty and the Dogs* by Kaouther Ben Hania, *Writing on Snow* by Rashid Masharawi, *Love of Men* by Mehdi Ben Attia

2016: *Zineb Hates the Snow* by Kaouther Ben Hania

2015: *Borders of Heaven* by Fares Naanaa

2014: *Challat of Tunis* by Kaouther Ben Hania

2012: *It Was Better Tomorrow* by Hinde Boujemaa, *Cursed Be the Phosphate* by Sami Tlili

Tanit Films is a production company based in Paris, founded in 2014 by Nadim Cheikhrouha.

2018: *Sheikh's Watermelons* (short) by Kaouther ben Hania, *Amin* by Philippe Faucon, *Weldi* by Mohamed Ben Attia

2017: *Beauty and the Dogs* by Kaouther Ben Hania, *Burning Hope* by Lotfi Achour

2016: *Hedi* by Mohamed Ben Attia

2015: *Fatima* by Philippe Faucon

2011: *The Disintegration* by Philippe Faucon



DIRECTOR
Zeina Sfeir

Color | 75 min
Arabic

TEAM
Zeina Sfeir (Director), Sabine
Sidawi (Producer), Gregor
Streiber (Producer)

TYPE
Feature Documentary Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$208,457

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$35,000

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WAITING FOR THE TRAIN

Lebanon

Log-line

This is a film about an unsolved massacre in my family that took place when I was not even two years old.

It's a film about growing up with war, growing up with fear, growing up with death.

Synopsis

On March 15, 1976, four men in their forties were brutally murdered. Their dead bodies were thrown in an abandoned land. Their town was struck by fear and terror. Complete silence took over. The villagers withdrew in their homes, wept there alone and kept their distance from everything that surrounded them.

The silence was heavy, terrifying, interrupted only by the sound of women wailing, a sound that echoed all over the town.

The train arrived to the train station where two of the victims worked. It whistled, then the sound started to fade away. It was the last train to ever arrive at Rayak train station. The two victims left the station upon the request of one of them; George Chebabi, clockmaker of the station and mayor of Rayak. He was very concerned about the situation. It was almost a premonition.

At that time, a new bloody chapter was about to be written in the history of the Lebanese Civil War that started in 1975.

Director's Biography

Zeina Sfeir is a documentary filmmaker, born in Beirut in 1974.

She graduated from Saint Joseph University - IESAV, with a degree in Audiovisual Studies in 1997.

She directed more than 12 documentaries and is now in the writing phase of her new feature documentary.

She has been a member of the cultural association Beirut DC and has played the role of artistic director of Beirut DC's Arab Film Festival Beirut Cinema Days.

Since 2007, she has been a programmer and Arab Communication and Film Talent Manager at the Dubai International Film Festival.

Zeina is also a film distributor and publicist, and the co-founder of MC Distribution – Lebanon, as well as a founding member of the cultural association of Cinema Metropolis.



ZEINA SFEIR
Director

Director's Statement

I grew up in a Christian region of Lebanon. The people in my surroundings had right-wing political opinions, but I didn't adhere to these opinions completely. Although I didn't follow a clear political path, my artistic choices since a very young age were more inclined to the left-wing way of thinking.

When I started my career as a filmmaker, I started searching for answers to the different questions I was asking myself. At that time, I understood that I was more inclined to the left-wing political beliefs, and that I don't really resemble my original background in my political convictions. This is from where I want to rediscover the details of a murder that shook my extended family and haunted our memory: four of my relatives were killed in my mother's hometown Rayak located in the Bekaa valley, next to the Syrian border.

The Lebanese cinema has already dealt with many killing stories and murders perpetrated by right-wing fighters during the Lebanese war. In this film I will try to present a bloody event that occurred during the civil war, whose victims were civilians who had right-wing opinions and never held a gun in their lives. One of these victims was the mayor of the town and a clockmaker, he was my aunt's husband, and after his murder, the whole family became a victim of the war – a family that holds on to a story and presents it as an absolute truth.



SABINE SIDAWI
Producer

Producer's Note

Making a film is always a journey, but making this film will be a very special journey for us. *Waiting for the Train* is a film with many layers – that's what immediately attracted us to the project. It deals with the very personal story of the director's family through which the geopolitical situation in Lebanon and the entire region is reflected. It's a shattering account of how war and violence shaped the lives of the director's family, just like so many other lives in the region; an account of the tragedy of personal loss and the universal senselessness of violence. It has historical elements to it, looking back at Lebanon's bloody history while at the same time being very up to date, pointing a finger at all the violence currently going on in the region. To convey all these different meanings, to capture all of these layers, Zeina has found a beautiful (visual) metaphor: the train network, or rather, the absence of it. In our opinion, this metaphor, which also has a strong connection to Zeina's family history, will enable her to not only tell the story, but to do it in a very poetic and sensual way, and to be ruthless and poetical at the same time. We believe that it's exactly this mix that will make this film so special, this use of a metaphor that will enable the film to reach a wide audience, both in the Arab world and beyond.



GREGOR STREIBER
Producer

Producer's Filmography

Gregor Streiber was born in Berlin in 1973. He started his career in media business as a trainee in film and TV production in 1993. While studying law, he kept working as a freelance producer for another eight years before starting his own company. Since 2001 Gregor Streiber produced more than 350 programs for German and international broadcasters, such as ZDF, ARTE, BBC, NHK, 3sat and others; from magazine reports to feature documentaries as well as creative documentaries which won prizes at international festivals. He is the owner and managing director of Werwiewas Medienproduktion and inselfilm produktion.

2012: Hungarian Moustache

2013: Beyond the Wave, Surviving the Tsunami - My Atomic Aunt

2014: The Serbian Lawyer

2016: The Dazzling Light of Sunset



DIRECTOR
Nadine Salib

Color | 90 min
Arabic

TEAM
Nadine Salib(Director), Nadine
Toukoun (Producer), Ruba
Atieh (Producer)

TYPE
Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$800,000

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$10,000

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YAM & I

Lebanon

Log-line

In a village atop the mountain, those who remember that water was once for everyone are declared mad.

Synopsis

In a faraway land hidden in the mountains and removed from time, lives Yam, a young mute girl, with her father Abra and her mother Tiara. After Tiara dies from unknown reasons, Yam has to partake in the ritual of erasing all the memory of her dead mother's existence in seven days in order to be freed from all mournful spirits. But Yam, who is numbed like others in her community, is haunted by the lullaby her mother used to sing to her before she died. The lullaby tells the story of a mute boy, who was saved by a bird that leads him to a faraway river. Yam breaks the law when she allows remembrance to kindle her soul, uncovering a great secret concealed by *the Guardians of the Water Well*, and accordingly jeopardizes her time to come in the village.

Director's Biography

Born in Egypt in 1984, Nadine graduated from a film school in Egypt in 2006. She started her career as an assistant director and script supervisor in many short and feature-length films, such as *Winter of Discontent*, directed by Ibrahim El Batout and *In the Last Days of the City*, directed by Tamer El Said. In 2012 she directed her first short documentary *Dawn*, which won several awards. *Um Ghayeb*, or *Mother of the Unborn* is her first feature-length documentary, which received many production grants and premiered at IDFA 2014, winning the Peter Wintonick Special Jury Award for First Appearance. It also won the FIPRESCI Award for Best Documentary at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival 2014. *Um Ghayeb* was selected in many international festivals such as Thessaloniki Documentary Film Festival, Carthage Film Festival and Sheffield Documentary Film Festival.



NADINE SALIB
Director

Director's Statement

This film is a meditation on trauma, unbearable emotions, social norms and displacement. The idea started coming through at a time when my country was mired in an endless social and economic upheaval. I tried to imagine how a person's life would look like if one lived in a world unencumbered by any chains of emotions or heaviness of memories, just an emotionally blinded person. This question became the premise of the film. I chose the story to be told through a young girl's eyes to make it sound like a bedtime story told through the summation of childhood imaginings. I am not intending to make a genre film, the overall structure of the film will be depending mainly on visuals and sonic scaping rather than informative dialogues. I intend to use Syriac as the spoken language of the film, since Syriac was a universal lingua-franca for centuries; every-day spoken Arabic in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Jordan and Egypt has very heavy traces of Syriac. I believe using a language as such will add an allegorical layer to the sonic atmosphere of the film and will help in establishing this fictional village. This language is currently associated with minorities and ethnic groups who are being migrated out of their lands, people from a forgotten time. For me one of the notable elements of dystopia is the normalization of death, violence and despair. In the past years I've been noticing how people react immunoely to obscene scenes of bloodshed or massacres; how they easily cope with such news has to do with normalizing loss, which is a main theme in the film. Ultimately, I would like to make a film that parades the possibilities that presume the rhythm of life involves more than birth, marriage, death.



NADINE TOUKAN
Producer

Producer's Note

At times when the world is dark and confused, storytellers across the arts must take it upon themselves to help interpret our feelings, amplify our concerns, and shed light on the possibility of transformation. As a producer who gets pitched a broad spectrum of projects from emerging filmmakers, it is not often that a great story with the right elements comes my way. *Yam & I* is just that.

The world created by the bold voice of Nadine Salib in *Yam & I* journeys through trauma, fear, despair, displacement and mores that imprison, all the while confronting the audience with the state of drought in nature and in human compassion. Through the power of imagination and dream states, the characters compel us along toward resilience, endurance and hopefulness. Nadine's choice of Syriac as the spoken language of the film lends to the authenticity of this fantastical world, offering yet another layer of originality to her singular vision.

This is a remarkable and timely project I am proud to support and help bring to the screen. We are seeking partners who wish to be part of the creation of powerful entertainment, and who will bring exceptional contributions to the artistic, technical, financial, and distributional stages of the project.

Filmography

As a producer and executive producer of award-winning, commercially released fiction features, I have been part of the evolution of Jordan's contemporary film movement since 2003, when we launched the Royal Film Commission.

There I led the capacity building department in identifying and cultivating industry skill sets and nurturing a community of workers and backers. I then went on to produce my first feature, *Captain Abu Raed*, the film that marks the comeback of Jordanian cinema after fifty years of absence. In 2008, *Captain Abu Raed* won the Sundance Audience Award for world cinema, was released in theatres and VOD platforms, and went on to win numerous awards. The next feature in 2012, *When Monaliza Smiled*, was an audience favorite which played in local theatres for nine weeks, their longest running film. And in 2014, *Theeb* premiered in the Horizons section of the Venice International Film Festival winning for best director, among a long list of awards ever since. *Theeb* went off to represent Jordan at the 88th Academy Awards, nominated in the Best Foreign Language category, another first for Jordan. Between 2015 and 2017 I worked with the Doha Film Institute, leading the production track of the Qatari Film Fund. A funded, managed, mentored program for emerging Qatari directors. As of 2018, I am developing storylines for commissioned writers and directors.

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122



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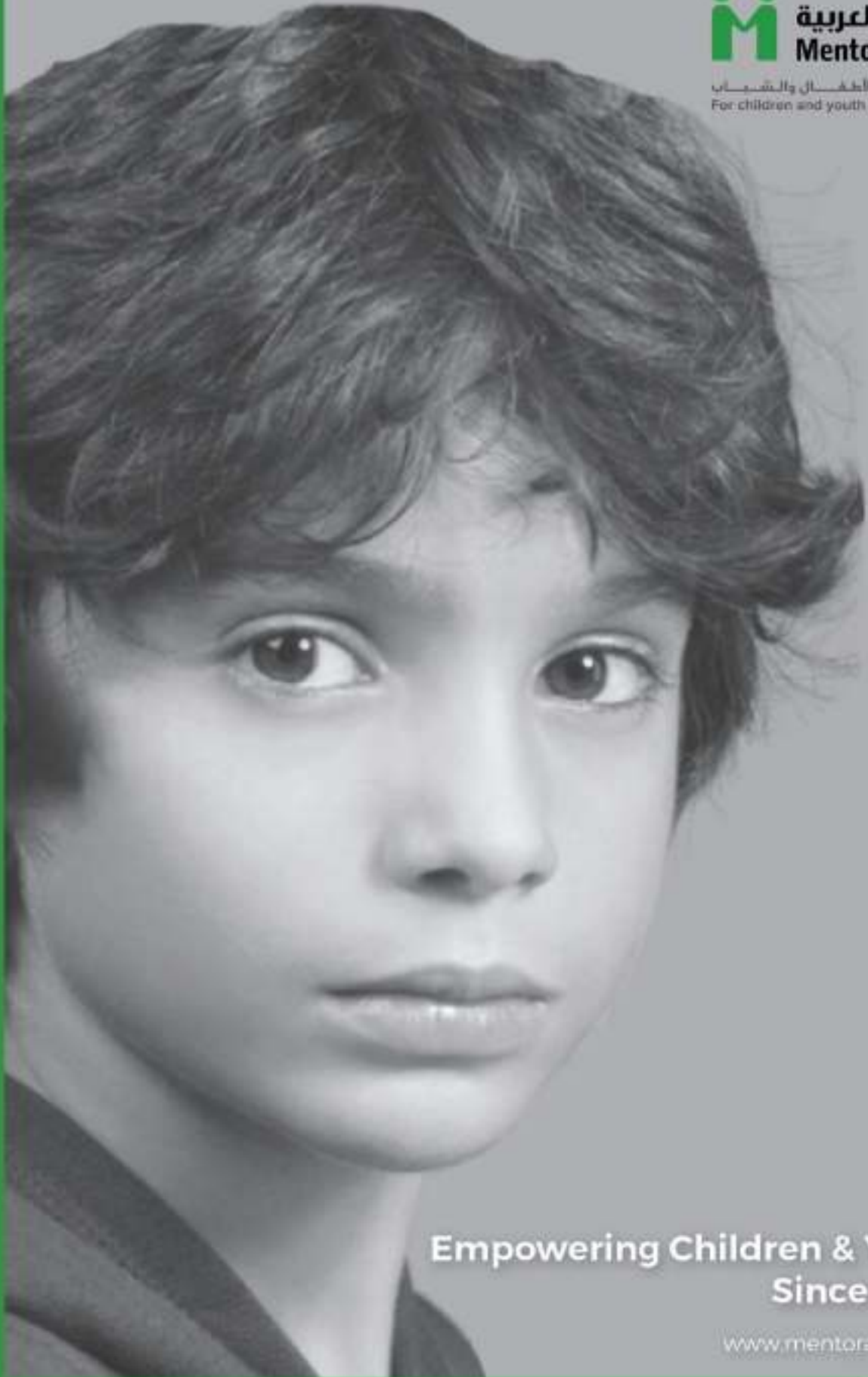
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FILMS IN POST-PRODUCTION



DIRECTOR
Oualid Mouaness

Color | 90 min
Arabic

TEAM
Oualid Mouaness (Director),
Georges Schoucair (Producer)

TYPE
Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$1,119,351

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$939,351

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1982

Lebanon

Log-line

When eleven-year-old Wissam decides to tell his classmate Joanna that he loves her, he is challenged by an invasion that threatens to permanently keep them apart.

Synopsis

June 1982, eleven-year-old Wissam is determined to tell his classmate Joanna that he loves her. It is the end of the academic year at a school tucked safely in the mountains overlooking Beirut; final exams are underway. As Wissam yearns to express himself, the day is interrupted when an air invasion reaches Beirut.

Even though the danger is still far, the school has to shut down and the students are sent home. Wissam gets more determined to declare his love as it becomes clear that no one knows what tomorrow will bring.

This story of first love against the backdrop of war portrays a day kids and adults will never forget.

Director's Biography

Oualid Mouaness, a Sundance Screenwriting Fellow, grew up between Lebanon and Liberia. After receiving his undergraduate degree with honors at LAU in Beirut, Mouaness acquired an MFA in Screenwriting and Directing at Florida State University. He went on to a dense producing career in narrative and documentary features, videos and commercials, most notably the documentary *Rize* (Sundance 2005/Oscar Shortlist 2005), *Kitchen Privileges* (SXSW 2000), a film he edited and co-produced; *Paris, Not France* (Toronto 2008) and *I Am Thalente* (LAFF 2015 Audience Award Winner.)

Mouaness headed the production company Windmill Lane Productions from 2002-2005. He has directed several shorts, the last of which, *The Rifle, the Jackal, the Wolf and the Boy*, was among the 10 live action short films that were shortlisted for the Oscars for the 89th Academy Awards.

1982 will be Mouaness' first feature as writer-director. The film is currently in post-production.



OUALID MOUANESS
Director

Director's Statement

I wrote this film with disdain for war. I chose to express it through the eyes of an 11-year-old whose imagination is captivated by his anime hero Dogfleeed, and the robot into which he transforms, Grendizer.

The story is drawn from my memory of a first love and a momentous day. I was 11 when Israel blitzed Beirut in 1982. Fifteen years later I wrote a short story I was unable to finish. It was then that I realized what had happened that day: I encountered love and separation from it, and it was my first experience of the disruptive force of war.

This Lebanese story is long overdue. With *1982*, I tell the story of each one of us. It is about the first love we have all felt. It is about humanity. It is about the fact that nothing matters except the girl we desire, even at age 11. The story ends with a triumphant spirit whereby the young boy and girl imagine the world being saved on their own terms.

This story is louder than it first appears to be, it is one of quiet defiance.



GEORGES SCHOUCAIR
Producer

Producer's Note

The activity around Lebanese cinema has grown considerably in recent years, and the world is steadily more interested in films originating from the Middle East. As a producer, my love for film often leads me to investigate this new wave of Lebanese filmmakers, on the lookout for stories that tackle themes which are both crucial and representative of our region.

1982 is a year that shaped our recent history. And from the unforgettable trauma we carry from that year, I was drawn to produce *1982* by Oualid Mouanes. This film tells history from the Lebanese perspective, rarely shown in cinema. It also tells history from a human standpoint. *1982* is about experiences we never forgot. No one can forget his first love, nor his first war.

Oualid Mouanes' talent was confirmed to the whole world when his latest short *The Rifle, the Jackal, the Wolf and the Boy* got shortlisted for the Academy Awards in 2017. He carries on in this feature the same strong complex characters, the attention to details, and intertwining between the intimate and the universal, the war inside and the war outside. About Productions has partnered up with Tricycle Logic and Mad Dog Films to produce this film. We've raised private equity from all over the world and secured funds from Doha Film Institute, OIF and Sorfond. We're currently looking to close our financing gap and to secure distributors, festivals and a sales agent.



Producer's Filmography

2018: *Le livre d'image* by Jean-Luc Godard, *Rafiki* by Wanuri Kahiu, *1982*, and *Spinning Man*.

2017: *Panoptic* by Rana Eid, *Lebanon Factory* by Ahmad Ghossein, *Lucie La Chimia*, *Shirin Abu Shaqra*, *Manuel Maria Perrone*, *Una Gunjak*, *Rami Kodeih*, *Mounia Akl* and *Neto Villalobos*, *Ila Ayn?* by Georges Nasser, *A Certain Nasser* by Badih Massaad and Antoine Waked, *Amal* by Mohamed Siam, *One of These Days* by Nadim Tabet, *Cactus Flower* by Hala Elkoussy, *Félicité* by Alain Gomis, *Wajib* by Annemarie Jacir, *Beauty and the Dogs* by Kaouthar Ben Hania, *Zama* by Lucrecia Martel, *Mr. Stein Goes Online* by Stéphane Robelin.

2016: *Letters from War* by Ivo Ferreira, *Tramontane* by Vatche Boulghourjian.

2015: *A Time to Rest* by Myriam El Hajj, *Cemetery of Splendour* by Apichatpong Weerasethakul.

2014: *The Valley* by Ghassan Salhab, *From My Syrian Room* by Hazem El Hamwi.

2013: *e muet* by Corine Shawi, *Ladder to Damascus* by Mohamad Malas, *Stable Unstable* by Mahmoud Hojeij.

2010: *Stray Bullet* by Georges Hachem, *Essential Killing* by Jerzy Skolimowski.



DIRECTOR
Hisham Saqr

Color | 100 min
Arabic

TEAM
Hisham Saqr (Director,
Producer), Mohamed Hefzy
(Producer)

TYPE
Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$397,238

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$276,238

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CERTIFIED MAIL

Egypt

Log-line

Since her husband went to jail, Hala had had to face her suicidal thoughts alone. Her strength has to come from within as society does not help nor forgive a depressed woman, especially if she is a mother.

Synopsis

Hala has been living with fear of abandonment since her father passed away when she was 18. She suffers from a post-natal depression and tries to commit suicide several times but she never goes all the way, she always leaves room for someone to rescue her.

Now her loving husband, who always rescued her from her suicidal thoughts, is facing a trial for a simple mistake at work. Hala is left alone with her depression, her thoughts and a six-month-old daughter. Despite her mental fragility, she needs to find a way to change in order to carry out her duties as a mother and a good wife to her jailed husband. The main difficulty is how to face herself, her fears and her depression now that she has no one to lean on and no moral support, and at the same time, face the reality she lives that includes her husband and daughter.

Director's Biography

Hisham Saqr was born in Cairo. He has more than 10 years of experience as an editor in the Egyptian film industry. Saqr has worked with a number of acclaimed Egyptian directors, most recently with Ahmad Abdalla on the award-winning *Rags and Tatters* (2013). The two previously collaborated on *Microphone* (2010), for which Saqr won the award for best film editor at the Dubai International Film Festival. He also edited Ibrahim Al Batout's *Winter of Discontent* (2012), which earned Saqr a best African editor nomination from the 2013 African Film Development Foundation Awards. His directorial credits include one short film *Bekara*, and *Certified Mail* is his first feature film.



HISHAM SAQR
Director

Director's Statement

I made a film about the idea of loss and how one can surprisingly find an inner strength to deal with it. How a normal person who is emotionally fragile can cope with such incomprehensible emotions as anxiety and depression that lead to suicidal thoughts. Personally I went all through these feelings and thoughts, so I started to think: what if the main character was a woman who just had her own child? The society is asking a lot of her especially after being a mother, and having her own child adds a lot more to the illogical fear and anxiety of losing even her newborn girl. These complex emotions and how she finds a way to cope with them is what I am examining in my film.



MOHAMED HEFZY
Producer

Producer's Note

I had worked with Hisham Saqr previously as an editor on *Microphone* and *Rags and Tatters*. I always knew that Hisham would direct one day, and that his work with the likes of Ahmad Abdalla and Ibrahim El Batout would prepare him well for his first film.

When I finally got a chance to read the script, I was happily surprised. Not only because it tackles themes that are universal and touching, but more so because of his mature and subtle treatment of the subject. It's not easy to make a film that begins with an attempted suicide and a struggling marriage, then subtly infuse the narrative with glimpses of life, and ultimately end with an infusion of hope.



Producer's Filmography

2018: Yomeddine by Abu Bakr Shawky

2017: Sheikh Jackson by Amr Salama

2016: Clash by Mohamed Diab, Ali, the Goat & Ibrahim by Sherif El-Bendary, Withered Green by Mohamed Hammad

2013: Rags and Tatters by Ahmad Abdallah

2011: Asmaa by Amr Salama



DIRECTOR
Walid Tayaa

Color | 80 min
Arabic

TEAM
Walid Tayaa (Director),
Richard Magnien (Producer),
Habib Attia (Producer)

TYPE
Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$593,446

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$431,941

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FATARIA

Tunisia

Log-line

May 2004, Tunis is full of excitement; it is the Arab Summit. In this frantic and burlesque atmosphere, an electrician, a choreographer, a sick man, and a professional mourner cross paths without ever really meeting, striving to deal with their personal problems.

Synopsis

2004 - Tunis, the Arab Summit. In this frantic and burlesque atmosphere, characters cross paths without ever really meeting, striving to deal with their personal problems.

Hamadi, electrician, has to repair a faulty supply system in a dilapidated apartment block. Hamadi is attracted to Naziha, a divorcee in her fifties who lives in the building.

Salha is trying by all means to earn a living in order to provide for her family. She can be a professional mourner and cry in deceased people's houses, then immediately after, enliven wedding parties.

Nadia, choreographer, tries to rehearse with her dancers in spite of the unbearable noise coming from a neighboring construction site held by a corrupt man.

Ammar is seeking treatment at the public hospital, both mistreated and sent away from one office to the other.

The Arab Summit is a success... while the characters fight for survival.

Director's Biography

Walid Tayaa was born in Tunis, on July 12, 1976. In 2006, he directed his first short film, *Madame Bahja*, which was selected at the Cannes Film Festival in the World Cinema section. In 2009, he made two short films, *Prestige* (screened at Berlinale 2010) and *Vivre*, awarded the Grand Prize at the 16th Festival du Film Méditerranéen in Tétouan and the Tanit d'Or at the JCC 2010.

In 2012, he made two more short films, *Boulitik* and *Chronique d'un Citoyen Ordinaire*, and developed a documentary *Tangled in Imbroglia*, supported by AFAC.

Fataria, supported by French CNC (Aide au Cinéma du Monde) and the Tunisian Ministry of Culture, is his first feature film.



WALID TAYAA
Director

Director's Statement

The four stories of *Fataria* make us face an absurd life. They take place on the day of the Arab Summit in Tunis.

The film takes place in one day. Events in crescendo plunge the characters in a Kafkaean atmosphere. They are abandoned, left to their own devices, to their own defeat. But they would still fight and survive.

My stories are immersed in a burlesque atmosphere and situations sometimes verge on surrealism, in the same vein as the Arab world, which is usually absurd. Dictatorship, bureaucracy, corruption have themselves led to a burlesque general atmosphere. The writing of *Fataria*, its style and tone, are determined by my Tunisian characters' real lives. The burlesque style of the film matches the absurdity and the surrealism of the situations they live in.

The film belongs to the genre of comedy, because I like telling the most tragic stories in a humorous tone. It is through derision, I think, that our chaotic destinies can be better understood, maybe also better overcome... maybe. «It is better to laugh than cry about it» goes the old saying.

Through *Fataria*, I would like first and foremost to unravel the reasons which led Tunisians to their revolution.



RICHARD MAGNIEN
Producer

Producer's Note

I've been accompanying Walid Tayaa with this project for several years. I've been immediately seduced by the originality of this project: a choral movie, a burlesque and caustic comedy taking place in the last years of Ben Ali in Tunisia. Several rewritings of the script and many fundraising approaches have allowed us to obtain the Aide au Cinéma du Monde in France and support by Tunisian Ministry of Culture. In 2017 we met with Habib Attia (Cinétéléfilms) and decided to start together the shooting of the film in October 2017, while adapting to the already obtained financing, by common agreement with the director. Today the film is in post-production.

The submitted cut we're glad to present you is the final cut (editing picture). The color grading that we intend to do this Fall with the director of photography will intensify the very colored tonality of this comedy. Sound has a subtle role in the film and the director wishes to integrate original music with a basis of percussions.

These last steps of post-production are essential. We do hope for your support to highlight the true qualities of the film and to be able to finalize it by January 2019.

Producer's Filmography

2018: We Could Be Heroes by Hind Bensari

2017: Beauty and the Dogs by Kaouther Ben Hania

2016: Zaineb Hates the Snow by Kaouther Ben Hania

2015: Borders of Heaven by Fares Naanaa

2014: Challat of Tunis by Kaouther Ben Hania

2013: Palestine Stereo by Rashid Masharawi

2012: It Was Better Tomorrow by Hinde Boujemaa

2011: No More Fear by Mourad Ben Cheikh



DIRECTOR
Mina Nabil

Color | 70 min
Arabic

TEAM
Mina Nabil (Director,
Producer), Mark Lotfy
(Producer)
TYPE
Feature Documentary Film
TOTAL BUDGET
US \$110,000
CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$83,000

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I AM A SCRIPT GIRL

Egypt, France

Log-line

In a male-dominated industry, she was the ultimate career woman.

Synopsis

I Am a Script Girl tells of the personal journey of Sylvette Baudrot, who spent 67 years behind the camera, working the same job as a script supervisor, creating a filmography of more than 120 films, with some of the world's leading directors and actors. She's enjoying her late eighties by going to the cinema every day, watching at least two or three films with each visit, remembering her childhood and career through films, and talking with people about what they can't find in film history books.

Sylvette is an immigrant who was born in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1928. She lived there until 1944, when she turned 16. She immigrated after the Second World War, crossing the Mediterranean on the first cargo ship from Alexandria to Paris, France with her younger sister, just one year her minor, aiming to start a new life. Her life was mysterious, full of big names and great stories.

She got an opportunity to work as a second unit script supervisor with Alfred Hitchcock in *To Catch a Thief* (1955). Because of her connection with Hitchcock, she started becoming well-known in France, especially after François Truffaut asked her to write an article for the Cahiers du Cinéma about her experience of working with Hitchcock on set at that time. Sylvette wrote the article which sparked Truffaut, who later grew closer to Hitchcock and created the renowned 40-hour interview of Hitchcock.

Director's Biography

Mina Nabil is a director, cinematographer and producer from Alexandria, Egypt, and he received in 2011 a bachelor's degree in Cinema Production.

Along with filmmaking, Mina is one of the co-founders of Fig Leaf Studios based in Alexandria. He has ten years of experience in filmmaking and has directed several shorts films which were screened at many film festivals. Mina has worked as a DOP in dozens of shorts, music videos, features and documentaries, such as Google, Facebook, UNAIDS, and MBC.

He has attended several master classes and learning platforms such as Beirut Talents 2015, Robert Bosch Stiftung 2016, American Film Showcase 2017 and Film Independent Fellow Doc Lab 2018.

Currently, Mina is mentoring Cinedelta, a one-year documentary workshop in Alexandria.



MINA NABIL
Director

Director's Statement

Making a film about films is delicate, especially after watching great ultimate films and directors. It is simple for Sylvette to talk, but to visualize the archive was an early challenge for this project. One of the results of the journey, as we have it now, is to produce *I Am a Script Girl*, because it affects the filmmakers.

We will be working on this film based on what we share from the understanding of our jobs through giants, who stepped on the film history stairs long before many of us, more than 60 years ago. *Hiroshima mon Amour* - Using the scripts, negatives, Polaroids, letters, and photos we will create a parallel world based on these elements. Specifically, it is just a simple breakdown of the layers of Sylvette's life, such as moving through the scripts and seeing the differences between the typewriter letters and Sylvette's notes, with pencil beneath it, and so on. It is a way to break the usual logic of expressing archive material in documentaries; we choose to create a world of the archive that can be a mysterious and entertaining visual medium.

Presenting a creative documentary portrait leads us not to use the original films, not just because of the film rights, but by using Sylvette's unseen archive we can cover the film and tell the story, giving the film a sense of originality and a zone to dive in through interviews with all the protagonists, then project those to form a special language through sound and visuals.



MARK LOTFY
Producer

Producer's Note

As a producer, I'm interested in the aspect of using the documentary films that document the history of cinema, thus conceiving the broader socio-political history, which was the topic of a previous project of mine as a producer, called *I Have a Picture*. Both projects intersect in some aspects and take off into different directions. *I Am a Script Girl* scrutinizes and unfolds the generational consciousness in the industry, not as a nostalgic process, but as trying to grasp the present moment in the experience-loaded light of the past and the chain links in between. This happens through the qualitative lens of gender analysis: Sylvette is a woman who has worked in a demanding and harsh job, which she has excelled in by studying, self-learning and extreme self-discipline, to become a woman whom all big male names in the domain depended on for her unique organizing skills.

A crucial point the project presents is understanding and analyzing the Egyptian and Arab societies, and the global changes happening, by studying "the other." The project, by closely studying a Western personality with Arab roots, regains the right to understand one by reflecting on the other. This opens the door for academics and filmmakers to go in the opposite direction: not only Westerners should come to study Alexandria as a part of their history, but also, as Mina is doing here, Alexandrians can study Europe as part of their personal and local heritage.



Producer's Filmography

Mark Lotfy is an Alexandrian filmmaker and producer from Egypt, whose work includes award-winning and officially selected feature films, short films, documentaries and visual arts at international and prestigious events like Berlinale, São Paulo, Karlovy Vary and Dubai film festivals among others. Through his own production entity Fig Leaf Studios that was established in 2005, Mark continuously promotes independent cinema and art movement in Alexandria, Egypt and the MENA region by capacity building and technical exchange of expertise with international artists and organizations.

2016: Cheerful Giver

2015: Expired, Under the Pyramid, The Visit, Dream Away, Ramady, I Have a Picture

2014: Al Araba Al Madfuna II

2013: Mice Room

2012: Ahlam

2011: Microphone

2008: Atef



DIRECTOR
Marwa Zein

Color | 75 min
Arabic

TEAM
Marwa Zein (Director,
Producer), Henrik Underbjerg
(Co-Producer), Jihan El Tahri
(Co-Producer)

TYPE
Feature Documentary Film

TOTAL BUDGET
€159,000

CONFIRMED FINANCING
€89,000

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OFF KHARTOUM SIDES

Sudan

Log-line

In a country that is going through many political, economical and social crises, can young women survive? What if they are playing football?

Synopsis

Off Khartoum Sides is an observational film that goes through the visual exploration of a country through the outsider lens.

It mixes the narrative that tells the story of the challenges of the women's national football team of Sudan with a cinematic narrative that tells the story of an outsider who is stealing emotions, notions, reactions, sounds and images to evoke deep understanding about this multilayered country.

Sudan has been marred in civil war and conflict over the past four decades. Its current conservative Islamic government has imposed many restrictions especially on women. However, women in my country - Sudan - have been trying to find spaces of expression and have consistently tried to expand their margin of rights and freedom.

I try, through my film, to give a true image about young women in Sudan today. It is more relevant than ever, given the changing social, economic and political situation in a country that has successfully remained hidden from the gaze of the entire world. Our protagonists all dare to be different and so they actively engage with the burden of being regarded as coming from an "inferior" tribe, a lower class - outcasts of Khartoum's Northern society. The girls have to confront the rampant corruption to survive, and through their daily routine and their battle to continue playing football, they expose many faces of Sudan.

Sara, Henda and Gaddal believe that through their talent and success they can try to change their reality and impose themselves on the rigid social beliefs. Will they succeed?

Director's Biography

Sudanese filmmaker Marwa Zein was born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia and lived in Egypt. She graduated from the Higher Institute of Cinema in Cairo. Now she's based in Khartoum, Sudan.

A Game, her graduation project, is an award-winning short film that was officially selected in more than 30 international festivals around the globe and translated into five languages.

Her new award-winning short fiction *One Week, Two Days* competed in more than 17 international film festivals. She worked as assistant director in Egypt with many well-known film directors like Hala Khalil, Daoud Abdel Sayed, Shady El Fakharany, Sherif Sabri and Khairy Beshara. Now, she's working on her first feature documentary film *Off Khartoum Sides*, which is in post-production and is supported by CNC, AFAC, IDFA, Alter-Cine and Sorfond.



MARWA ZEIN
Director, Producer

Director's Statement

Identity questions and the idea of "home" drove me, for years, to reflect about Sudan. I went to university in Cairo and it is this chapter of my life that brought me closer to my native Sudan and nourished the desire to dig deeper into my own country. Often, distance, whether temporal or geographical, helps one see things in their utmost raw state, and offers a brutal clarity and a tender nostalgia.

Indeed, the status of women in Sudan was the initial attraction to the story. But as I got to know my protagonists I suddenly realized that those three young women represent all the component parts of my country with its complexity, its conflicts but also its beauty and dynamism. Through their story – in which I rarely appear but I remain part of the narrative – I can grasp and transmit an authentic slice of life in Khartoum.

Every aspect of life in Sudan holds a woman back from doing what she wants; the dos and don'ts are designed to contain our freedom. For me, even holding the camera in the street was a struggle! I now realize how lucky I am to have been let into the intimacy of these girls and that they have allowed me to reveal their courage, which they often don't even see! And to be more attached to this film, it's my own way of telling a story about our beloved, troubled Sudan.

Producer's Filmography

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Producer's Filmography

Henrik Underbjerg

2017: Aleppo's Fall, Danmark, What a Circus!, Three Heists and a Hamster, Drengene mod Pigerne

2016: The Islands and the Whales

2015: Rosita

2014: 1989, Drone, The Cartel

2013: Sorrow and Joy, Sepideh, Min skolelærer, American Vagabond, All for Two

2012: Law of the Jungle, Mig og min tvilling, Stuck in the Middle, Mig uden dig, Jennis storesøster

2011: Requiem 2019, How Are You, All for One

Jihan El Tahri

2018: The Feeling of Being Watched

2016: Les pharaons de l'Egypte Moderne

2015: Nasser

2012: Sudanna al Habib

2010: Independent Lens

2008: Behind the Rainbow



DIRECTOR
Sara Kaskas

Color | 68 min
Arabic

TEAM
Sarah Kaskas (Director),
Liliane Rahal (Producer), Ines
Meier (Co-Producer)
TYPE
Feature Documentary Film
TOTAL BUDGET
US \$136,327
CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$75,639

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UNDERDOWN

Lebanon

Log-line

Underdown is a pulsating journey of three unbreakable characters who are struggling under the poverty line in the chaos of Beirut.

Synopsis

In the concrete jungle that is Beirut, people suffer at the hand of what's dubbed to be the most corrupt government in the Middle East. Decades of wars have left the tiny city with a crumbling infrastructure, inflation, the poverty line is rising and the conflicts in neighboring Syria have forced over 1.5M refugees to flee into the country.

Abu Housam is an elderly Palestinian taxi driver who works and sleeps in his car, drinking araq and cracking witty jokes at the city outside his window. He abandoned his family to live alone knowing they're better off without him.

Heartbroken from a recent loss of a lover, he struggles to focus on his goal of buying his own car, a shelter for his future.

Eleven-year-old Syrian refugee Ali has chosen to live alone on the streets, calling them his freedom. He loves the sea and his friend Azzam who has gone missing, and is constantly waiting for his return.

The unmarried Lebanese woman Samya lives with her family in a tiny room. Struggling to make ends meet, Samya tries to care for her mother, who is going blind from glaucoma.

Under Beirut's umbrella of corruption and chaos, *Underdown* follows the three resilient characters on a pulsating journey through their daily struggles living with poverty. Stuck in dark loops of violence, social injustice and alcohol abuse, they connect in their search for hope, freedom and happiness.

Director's Biography

Sarah Kaskas received her MFA in Cinematic Arts in 2011. Her thesis film, *Fugue* (2011), toured to several festivals before being sold to BBC Arabic's Alternative Cinema. In 2013, her animated short film *Wanderland* won an award at the Co-Production Forum at the Stuttgart International Animation Festival, and was nominated for the Robert Bosch Film Prize in 2014. In 2016, Kaskas co-directed *Bread and Tea*, which was named Best Short Documentary at Iran's Cinéma Vérité. Her upcoming feature documentary was nominated for the Robert Bosch Film Prize in 2017 and received a production grant from Doha Film Institute. She resides in Beirut and is an Assistant Professor of Film at the Lebanese American University.

The director's filmography includes short documentary *Bread and Tea* (2016), short animation *Wanderland* (2012), short fiction *Fugue* (2011), short fiction *Primal* (2010), short documentary *Luminous* (2010), and short fiction *Labyrinth* (2006).



SARA KASKAS
Director

Director's Statement

I'm not alone when it comes to feeling both love and hate towards Beirut and its beautiful mess. With the current uproar against a corrupt government and a crumbling infrastructure, it becomes difficult to be grateful for what little we may have. Inequality is not a novel in Lebanon, but the number of people living under the poverty line in Lebanon has risen by 66% since the Syrian conflict.

The protagonists in *Underdown* are living in poverty and are facing conflicts most of us are lucky to never experience. To the outsider, they are pariahs, cast aside as "drunks", "beggars" or "dirty people". Overlooked is their resilience, humor and overwhelming hope that drives them forward. Their individual struggles include discrimination, family and identity issues, unemployment, homelessness and alcohol abuse. Capturing the essence of these characters requires trust, respect and honesty. With a sensitive eye level approach and a striking visual language that is inspired by the characters themselves, *Underdown* explores the similarities of these stories, rooted in Lebanon's corrupted government and decades of war.

As a Lebanese filmmaker, I believe the amount of stories at our disposal are limitless but stories of hope are essential. The sarcastic humor the Arab region is famous for is not only a way of coping with relentless social realities; humor is also the most relatable way of telling stories that are hard to listen to but need to be heard – and therefore a compelling cinematic strategy of taking back control over our own stories.



LILIANE RAHAL
Producer

Producer's Note

There are holes in the streets of Beirut, and I walk by them daily. I lived by the day and accepted the corruption of our country, until I almost fell. My anger and hunger to defy the system kept growing in me. I knew I had to do something or say something. I did not want to find myself at the bottom of the chaos.

After working with Sara on several projects, together we co-directed *Bread and Tea*, a short documentary that portrays the harsh reality of a Syrian kid living in inhuman conditions in a refugee camp in Lebanon. Our small film won the award for Best Short Documentary at Cinéma Vérité in 2016.

Underdown is an important story to be told through an observational eye, as it introduces 3 protagonists from different nationalities and religions living in modern day Beirut. Despite their difficulties surviving day by day, their faith in themselves is strong. They are independent, self-sufficient and they maintain a dark sense of humor. These are characters who are not depicted on film in this region and having access to them is a responsibility that I am confident my team and I will deliver with respect and honesty.

Teaming up with Ines Meier, our German co-producer whom we've met during the selection of our film at the Film Prize of the Robert Bosch 2017, is a great key, as I believe that the story needs a foreign point of view on the Lebanese society and the country as a whole.



Producer's Filmography

Liliane Rahal is a Lebanese producer who has more than 10 years of experience in film production in Beirut and the region. Her work includes award-winning TVCs, corporate films and documentaries. Liliane pursues her love for photography by teaching a year-long workshop to incarcerated women in Lebanon. This workshop was produced by the Zakira Image Festival in 2013. Liliane produced and co-directed *Bread and Tea*, a short film revolving around the life of a Syrian child in a refugee camp, which won the best short documentary award at the Cinéma Vérité 2016 in Iran. Liliane has recently executed the production of a sci-fi web series *Arabs in Space* produced by Cinemoz, which is the first of its genre in the region.

2018: Arabs in Space (web series)

2017: Salamat from Germany

2016: Bread and Tea

2015: Damour - Story of a Land



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GUEST
FILM IN
POST-PRODUCTION



DIRECTOR

Suhaib Gasmelbari

Color | 90 min

Arabic, English

TEAM

Suhaib Gasmelbari (Director),
Scriptwriter and DoP, Marie
Balducchi (Producer)

TYPE

Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET

€480,286

CONFIRMED FINANCING

€435,286

THE WAITING BENCH

France, Sudan, Chad, Germany

Log-line

Ibrahim, Soliman, Manar and Altayeb are four Sudanese filmmakers and close friends for more than 45 years. They tirelessly try to inspire the love of cinema in a wounded country.

Synopsis

Their names are Ibrahim, Soliman, Manar, Altayeb, and they are few of the first Sudanese who had the opportunity to study cinema in East Germany, the Soviet Union and Egypt in the 1960s and 1970s. They are all members of the Sudanese Film Group, idealists and intensely humane. Their love for cinema is limitless.

After more than 15 years of distance and exile, they are reunited to bring their old dream back to life: make cinema a reality in Sudan and allow films to be available to all.

They are determined to keep moving, to leave a trace of their passage. They roam the roads with their van to screen films and to inspire love for cinema.

Through their quest for images – for those who exist, those who could have existed and those that have been lost or censored – the beautiful and horrific face of their country appears.

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Director's Biography

Suhaib Gasmelbari Mustafa was born in 1979 in Sudan. He studied cinema at the University Paris VIII in France. He worked as a freelance cameraman/editor, collaborating with journalists to direct reports for Alqarra, Al Jazeera and France 24. He has written and directed many short films, both fiction and documentary. *The Waiting Bench* is his first feature film.

Suhaib Gasmelbari is also a researcher with a special focus on Sudanese audiovisual archives.

Through his research he was able to find some lost Sudanese films, and actively participated in international and local projects to save and digitize some precious films by Ibrahim Shadad, Suliman Mohamed Ibrahim and Altayeb Mahdi.



SUHAIB GASMELBARI
Director

Director's Statement

"Why did you return to Sudan, what do you want to do? Go back to Europe, make European movies or sit here with us on our waiting bench?"

That is the dilemma I was presented with by my Sudanese elders. The elders in question are the filmmakers who founded the Sudanese Film Group in 1989. They are now aged between 70 and 83 and travel throughout the country with the small mobile cinema they have founded. They pass their knowledge onto people and inspire their love for cinema, despite the hardships and despite their canvas screen that cannot withstand storms.

This is the tale of their 45 years of attempting to make films and of the tireless hope that unites them forever. The story of a struggle of a gang of four crafty men with a witty sense of humor.



MARIE BALDUCCHI
Producer

Producer's Note

The Waiting Bench brings out of the shadow four flamboyant Sudanese filmmakers, who use the cinema as a desire for light and poetry, strongly believing in what they call the "luminous landscape of this beautiful art."

When I saw the first images that Suhaib brought back from Sudan, I felt deeply touched by the strength of soul and the friendship and solidarity connecting Ibrahim, Suleiman, Manar and Altayeb. They are cultivated old men but they joke and tease each other like a group of teenagers. This fascinating mix of creative intensity and genuine affection makes them instantly endearing.

Suhaib wanted to explore a cinematographic tangent, in the form of a nostalgic and brilliant tale balanced between documentary and fiction. *The Waiting Bench* will be the opportunity of a rare insight in the Sudanese cinematography as well as the discovery of a new talented filmmaker.

Producer's Filmography

2017: *Oblomov* by Guillaume Gallienne

2016: *A Young Girl in Her Nineties* by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi and Yann Coridian

2015: *The Three Sisters* by Valeria Bruni

2014: *National Diploma* by Dieudo Hamadi

CINEGOUNA SPRINGBOARD SCHEDULE

	Saturday, 9/22	Sunday, 9/23	Monday, 9/24
10 AM	G31/G32	G31/G32	G31/G32
11 AM	"Perfecting Your Pitch" Training Session	Pitch Session of Films in Post-Production	Pitch Session of Films in Post-Production
12 PM	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break
1 PM		Pitch Session of Films in Post-Production	
2 PM			
3 PM			
4 PM	G-Space	G-Space	G-Space
5 PM			
6 PM		"Understanding Film Markets" - Chat with the Expert	
7 PM			

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	Tuesday, 9/25	Wednesday, 9/26	Thursday, 9/27
10 AM	G31/G32	G31/G32	G31/G32
11 AM	Pitch Session of Films in Post-Production	Pitch Session of Projects in Development	"Now What? Tips & Tricks for Filmmakers" Training Session
12 PM	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	
1 PM	Pitch Session of Films in Post-Production		
2 PM			
3 PM			
4 PM	G-Space	G-Space	Marina Theater
5 PM			
6 PM		"Actor's Journey" - Chat with the Expert	CineGouna Platform Awards Ceremony + Reception
7 PM			

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